

# DCFS Weekly Update From the State Office

Friday, August 4, 2000

## From My Perspective

*By Ken Patterson*

### Message from our Board and Board Chair

Attached to this weekly update is a message from our Board and our new DCFS Board Chair, Becky Oakley. I would encourage you to open and read it soon. All Board members have some interaction with you, but Becky understands your work from a unique perspective. She is the mother of young children, she is the foster parent of a special needs child, she has fostered structured level children, she developed the peer parenting program, and she also sits on the board of the Utah Foster Care Foundation. So in short, she knows us and knows the work we do. She knows our warts and she knows our triumphs.

### DCFS democracy in action (a rare moment)

We had what may be a "practice model" moment this week regarding office space for the Cottonwood Region. As many of you know, sometime ago Cottonwood divided their service delivery into four "neighborhood teams," Murray, West Jordan, Sandy/East Jordan, and Tooele, but only Tooele had true neighborhood office space. The rest of the staff is located right behind Fashion Place Mall. As much as we wanted to move to neighborhood space, we were stuck in a long lease that financially prevented our relocating.

Region Director Heber Tippetts let the Division of Facility and Construction Management (DFCM) know several months in advance that he wanted them to send out an RFP for new neighborhood space. DFCM dropped the ball. No RFP was sent. So Heber was faced with a lease expiring in 60 days and no progress on our request for neighborhood based space. Their inaction created the following dilemma: renew the existing lease for another three years, thus delaying neighborhood location or do a hurry up RFP and risk being out on the street if new, adequate, affordable, neighborhood space could not be located in 60 days.

A few years or even months ago a small group of administrators would have made the decision about what to do. But better sense prevailed this time and someone said, "lets ask the Cottonwood staff." After all, who is most affected by such events?

So through the power of e-mail a simple note was sent to all the Cottonwood staff (excluding Tooele) explaining the dilemma and the risks and asking for a vote. The choices were 1) lets stay put 2) lets seek new space even with the risks or 3) I don't care.

And by quitting time on Monday the vote was in: 51% said stay put...too many changes in my life already this year; 38% said risks be damned...I want to move to the neighborhood; and 11% said I am cool with whatever happens. The people had spoken—and quickly I might add.

So it was determined to renew the lease for another three years, and write a flaming letter to DFCM about not being more responsive to our customers needs. And while it was a small exercise in using some of the principles of Practice Model it worked for me and for Heber.

## Foster Care Clusters

I have it on very good authority that nice progress is being made on establishing chartered foster care clusters in several sites in the Cottonwood Region. This is a collaborative effort between DCFS, Utah Foster Family Association, and The Utah Foster Care Foundation. If you want to hear more about how cluster organization is coming, contact Judy Maynard, Joelle Horel at DCFS, or Nikki MacKay at the Foundation.

A grant to support further foster cluster development has been submitted to the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Casey will send a representative to visit Utah in early October to assess our readiness to receive grant funds.

## What's Happening with the 24-Hour Meetings?

When the DCFS Administrative Team meets next week a major topic will be how we are conducting the 24-hour meetings. What outcome are we seeking and how can we improve them? A panel of staff will present their ideas and experiences. If you have strong thoughts about the 24-hour meetings, e-mail you ideas to your Region Director and copy Abel Ortiz.

## **The Practice Model and Practice Model Training**

*By Richard Anderson*

Remembering when we began to build our model in the division, we determined that it would be best if we shored up the foundation of our philosophy and practice first, before we moved on to higher level skills. We felt this decision was a good one, in that we had gone through many different transitions as an agency as far as philosophy and practice emphasis and the things that we saw as our priorities at different times. The Practice Model was a way to make sure that we had now, at this time in our agency, a consistent philosophy and a set of expected practices that everyone could expect of each other and that the community could be guaranteed we would deliver.

In the process of delivering the training, this may have been forgotten, as we are hearing there some who are feeling that we are delivering pieces of training that are beneath their skills. We apologize if this comes across as offensive in any way. Our intent is really to make sure that we have a standard level that everyone is expected to meet. If someone is already there, that's great! We just want to make sure that we have the same philosophy and set of skills for everyone.

So that everyone will know where we are planning to go in the future, we do have higher level skills training and more functional specialization training planned in areas such as foster care, CPS, in-home, domestic violence, and youth services. All of these future, more specialized trainings, will build on the foundation we are now laying. Even though we are putting in the basic foundation, you may find there are some new

skills or concepts to be picked up in the training. We have also been hearing a lot of positive responses from time spent together in training—forums to talk about what matters most—day to day work and how to go about it.

A lot of the model training is not new, but adds important pieces that have not been there for us in the past. Don't miss these added pieces! There is a national phenomenon occurring, where practice knowledge of the past three decades has evolved to allow us to better individualize services with much more beneficial outcomes. We are finding that services do not have to take as long in the new model.

Midge Delavan and I are very open to your comments and your suggestions for ways to make sure we have a firm foundation of philosophy and basic skills, and that high level skills are made available.

## **To Make Your Life Easier: Using SAFE Optimally**

*By Robert Lewis*

Some offices are still doing things the old, hard, USSDS way. This article will become part of the Weekly Updates for the next few weeks and should provide you with some very useful ways to make your life easier.

For one thing, when a CPS worker does a removal and puts a child in shelter, it is no longer necessary to open an SCF case in order to pay the shelter parents. In SAFE, documenting the removal and placement and setting up a shelter purchase service authorization can all be done in the CPS case!

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*Mission: To provide a citizen perspective that views  
children as our highest priority.*

July 10, 2000

Dear Division of Child and Family Services Staff,

As the Board of Child and Family Services, we would like to take a moment to assure you that we are aware of and grateful for your work and efforts on behalf of abused, neglected and dependant children and their families. Thank you for the hours and effort you pour into your work. Many say yours is a thankless job, and this thank you probably pales in the face of the struggles, difficulties, and occasional unpleasantness of your undertakings. We recognize that the increased obstacles encountered recently with the budget challenge makes your job even tougher.

By statute we are a policy making Board, with direct responsibility for establishing and overseeing the implementation of Division policy. With the sunset of the lawsuit and its many points of compliance, we have the dawning of practice model principles to lead us in our continuing commitment to provide outstanding services for children and families.

As a Board we strive to enact policy that will give you the framework and support that you need when making the important day-to-day decisions that you make. Policies should be supportive enough to provide good stability, yet broad enough to allow for latitude needed in each case with the child's best interest always paramount. We have yet to pass what we would call an "insignificant" policy, or a policy that doesn't really matter. Some policies draw more attention than others, but each is as important to the framework as the other.

We encourage you to utilize Division of Child and Family Services policies as tools to apply good, solid, principle-based decisions for the best interests of children and their families. We reiterate the need for statewide adherence to Division policy. We open our door to your comments, suggestions and feedback regarding Division policies and implementation. We look forward to personally visiting with you as occasions arise.

We cannot thank you enough for your work and effort on behalf of Utah's at-risk children and families. The impact that you make, though individual, is one of the most significant a family may ever have. Thank you for your dedication to children and families.

Sincerely,

Becky Oakley, Chair